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# FOUR YEARS IN EUROPE

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By BISHOP WILLIAM BURT

The Quadrennial Report of the  
General Superintendent Resident in Europe  
to the General Conference of 1908

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## FOUR YEARS IN EUROPE

Our work in Europe as well as its growth and development is purely providential. We are in Europe because God led us there, and in spite of enormous difficulties we have succeeded because God has approved and blessed our efforts. German and Scandinavian immigrants were converted at our altars here, and then they sought to evangelize their relatives and friends in the fatherland. The method was simply that of the New Testament. Andrew finds Jesus and he immediately goes and tells Simon, saying, "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."

These friends in the fatherland soon asked that preachers might be sent to them. At the General Conference held in Pittsburg in 1848, Dr. William Nast pleaded that someone might be sent to Germany. The next year Dr. L. S. Jacoby was sent, and later others went to Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Denmark. They were not all preachers. Some were converted sailors. In 1854 there came sailing up the beautiful harbor of Arendal, Norway, a ship with all the sailors on board converted men. They were singing the hymns of salvation which they had learned in the Bethel ship at New York.

Class meetings and Sunday schools and churches were organized. Papers and tracts and books were printed, and helpers were raised up on the field to carry on the rapidly growing work. Now Methodism extends from the Black Sea on the east to the British channel on the west, and from the north pole to Sicily. We have ten Annual and Mission Conferences, four hundred and ninety-eight ordained ministers, an increase of forty-four during the quadrennium. Sixty-six thousand five hundred and seventy-two members, an increase of six thousand two hundred and fifty-four. Sunday school scholars and teachers, eighty-five thousand four hundred and forty-eight, an increase of five thousand seven hundred and seventy. We have also about four hundred and ninety deaconesses in connection with our Euro-



pean Methodism. There are publishing houses, deaconesses' Homes, hospitals, schools of various grades and Church properties in all these lands, valued at \$4,500,000.

During the quadrennium we have built sixty new churches, twenty-eight new parsonages, and four other new buildings, with an increased valuation for the four years of \$890,185. One of the new churches is the beautiful church at Helsingfors, Finland, worth at least \$60,000 and free of debt.

During the past year, 1907, the contributions to the Missionary Society amounted to \$13,011, and for self-support \$248,032. In addition to this there are special gifts for India, China, and Africa amounting to more than \$5,000 per year. We have had a great revival of missionary interest in all these Conferences. Last summer Bishop Hartzell visited several of the Conferences and rendered efficient service. Some of the Conferences are supporting lighthouses in Africa. Sweden has sent two young men to Inhambane, East Africa, and a young woman to China, while Germany has at present four missionaries in the Bismarck archipelago. Contributions for all purposes during four years amounted to \$1,492,399, which is certainly evidence of strength and of native growth.

Thousands of our European converts, however, belong to our Church and to other evangelical Churches here in America. Who can estimate the blessings that have come to the homeland through these immigrants who have brought with them here a living Christian experience, and hence have become agents for good to their fellow-countrymen here in America? Now we can see one of the providential reasons why as a Church we were led to the continent of Europe. We are constantly sending over here Methodist missionaries from Europe to preach to their fellow-countrymen—Italians, Finns, Hungarians, Bohemians, and others! We believe that when our Church shall be fully awakened to her obligation and privilege in this homeland we shall reap a rich harvest among these foreign-speaking people. The fields are already white unto the harvest.

The statistics of the work as it now exists, encouraging as they are, do not tell of all the victories won. Methodism has already become a spiritual force among the nations of Europe, saving them from cold rationalism and dead formalism. We know, and

spiritually minded people who are not members of the Methodist Church acknowledge, that we have been the means of the salvation of thousands who are not called by our name. One writing us from Germany last summer said: "I wish you could have been with us to witness revival scenes that remind one of the early days of Methodism. We are using a big tent and scores are converted every night. It would rejoice your heart to see the union existing between State Church pastors and our preachers." Professor Harnack has said: "No type of believers has interested me more than the Methodists. If I read church history correctly, that denomination is richest in experimental religion, most active in Christian work, most fertile in results of all since the time of the Reformation."

We believe that what Methodism has done for the English-speaking world Methodism will accomplish on the continent of Europe. The greatest blessing that could possibly come to all these countries would be a revival of soul-stirring, conscience-awakening, joyous Methodism, and I am happy to report that the revival is on.

The last four years have been the most strenuous four years of my life. I have literally traveled throughout the connection. In addition to my work in the Conferences I have lectured and held evangelistic services in several of the countries, and through circulars and correspondence tried to stimulate ministers and churches in all that pertains to the progress of the work. During two winters I held Sunday evening services in our First Church, Zurich. One winter I was in Africa, and the other winter holding Conferences in America.

My first purpose has been to conserve the many good things inaugurated by my greatly beloved predecessor, Bishop Vincent, to open new fields and to push the work vigorously along all lines. It was not an easy task to follow one so fruitful in resources, so active and so beloved as Bishop Vincent. I have been sincerely thankful for his sympathetic help.

In addition to my work in Europe I visited Africa, served as Fraternal Delegate to the Irish and British Conferences, and presided over fourteen Conferences in America. In all I have held fifty-six Conferences on three continents, and traveled more than one hundred and twenty-five thousand miles. I reverently



thank God for his marvelous care and gracious help. He has been with me every day and in all the way.

#### ITALY

During the quadrennium the work in Italy has been under the special care of Dr. N. Walling Clark, Professor Edward Spencer, two native presiding elders, three ladies of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, and a corps of forty native ministers. There are at present three thousand six hundred and eighty-nine members in Italy, a net gain of nine hundred and sixty-three. We also have property valued at \$465,000, a net gain during the quadrennium of \$100,000. God has shown us a wide-open door for the evangelization of the Italians both in Italy and in America. If we allow this day of opportunity to pass unimproved, woe to us and to our great Church!

#### BULGARIA

We generally begin our round of Conferences with Bulgaria. Nearly all who go to Bulgaria, and see the country as it is, and personally witness what we are doing there, come back, in spite of all the criticisms of the past, enthusiastic for our Bulgaria Mission. There is something about the country which captures sympathy, stirs enthusiasm, and kindles hope. I cannot understand how one can read the history of modern Bulgaria without being profoundly stirred. For five centuries—1398 to 1878—the Bulgarians were under the power of the Turks. Western Europe had almost forgotten the existence of this nation which had once taken a prominent part among the great powers. The Bulgarians lay helpless and hopeless beneath their twin masters, the Turkish governors and Greek ecclesiastics. After nearly five centuries of Turkish bondage Bulgaria gained her freedom mostly through the pens and swords of foreigners. The Bulgarians may not be the most attractive of the Balkan races but they possess sterling qualities which must tell in the long run. They have already built railways, constructed bridges, and greatly improved their roads. The capital city has so advanced that one can scarcely recognize in the Sofia of to-day the little Turkish town of thirty years ago. Social questions are beginning to arouse the people from indifference, and education is under-



mining the superstitions and influence of the State Church. We have made five visits to Bulgaria, and we can see no reason why our Church should not succeed there. Thank God, we are succeeding.

In 1905 we transferred to Bulgaria the Rev. E. E. Count, of the New York Conference, and appointed him superintendent of the mission. He has proved himself to be the right man in the right place. His administration has been wise, prudent, firm, and withal aggressive. The last two years have been the best in the history of the mission, and the last the best of all. The reports show a net gain of one hundred members for the past year and one hundred and seventy for the quadrennium, and a decided advance in all departments.

Our noble women of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, in their school at Lovetch, have been preparing the way for these better results. We have sown in tears, we are now reaping in joy! Let us determine on a liberal, progressive, and just policy, resolved, God helping us, to take this pearl of the Balkans for Christ.

#### HUNGARY

Although recent years have added much to our knowledge of the territory of Hungary, our acquaintance with its gifted people is yet very limited. Hungary is a country larger in area than Austria, Italy, or than Great Britain. It comprises every variety of scenery from the cold pine forests of the North to the vineyards and olive gardens in the south. There are immense fields of wheat like those in Kansas or Iowa; great plains for cattle and large mineral resources, especially iron, copper, and tin. The Danube and the Theiz are both great navigable rivers, highways of commerce. The Hungarian, sometimes called the Englishman of the East, is high-minded, patriotic almost to excess, strong-willed, full of ideas, and in national and economic matters of consuming energy. In the course of thirty-five years this people has succeeded in creating commerce, great manufactories, a network of railroads, a system of education, and national schools of literature, science, journalism, painting, and music. In no country of Europe are the elements which make for liberty, equality, and justice more alive than in Hungary. Buda-

pest, the capital city, is an expression of the people's intelligence and energy. From a comparatively unknown town thirty years ago it has become one of the leading cities of Europe with a population of nearly 900,000. It had an electric subway before any was thought of for Boston or New York, and its underground trolleys antedate all others. A few years ago a copy of the *Christliche Apologete*, published at Cincinnati, came into the hands of a schoolmaster at Verbasz. He subscribed for the paper, formed a reading circle, and every week read portions of it to his friends and neighbors. In one of the copies he found the address of our minister at Vienna, and sent for him to come and preach to them. A gracious revival was the result. A Brother Pfeifer, who was with his wife converted under the preaching of the first sermon, was the lay delegate to the Lay Electoral Conference at Berlin last summer. In 1900 Bishop Vincent appointed the Rev. Otto Melle in charge of this work, and now we have a presiding elder's district with twelve preaching places. There is a great future for our work in Hungary. It would be well if Austria-Hungary could be constituted into a separate mission. I know of no more promising field for Methodism in all Europe. The evangelization of Hungary is also very important because it is the boundary between the Orient and the Occident. Here we have Hungarians, Germans, Roumanians, Slavonians, Servians, and many other nationalities.

Austria is still a difficult field, but the door is being pried open. Universal suffrage has been granted, and during the past few years more than fifty thousand people have abandoned popery at the cry of "Los von Rom."

#### SWITZERLAND

In Switzerland, we have nearly ten thousand members, and more than twenty-two thousand scholars and teachers. My first Conference there was at Schaffhausen. On Sunday we were granted the use of the old cathedral, and about two thousand people assembled. You can imagine my feelings that Sabbath morning as I preached from that old pulpit built before the time of the Reformation. It was to me a vindication of time and an inspiring prophecy.



## GERMANY

In Germany to-day we have a membership of more than twenty-four thousand, and an able body of one hundred and seventy ministers that will compare favorably with any other like number in the Church. During the past four years our people in Germany contributed nearly \$600,000 for the support of the work. Our success in that great empire is far beyond what the fathers of fifty years ago dared to dream might be possible. We have progressed most where the spirit of opposition has been the greatest. For instance, in Saxony, our people have, until very recently, been fined and sometimes imprisoned. When one wishes to join our Church, he must go to the pastor of the State Church and declare his intention. After four weeks of reflection, he must return and renew his declaration. Then he receives a certificate which he takes to the court and his name is enrolled among the dissenters, and he has to pay about three dollars for the necessary papers. Precisely here we are making the largest gains. No one can now imagine the possibilities of the future when the spirit of Methodism shall have more thoroughly permeated that great people. I sometimes have glorious visions of what our German Methodists are to accomplish in the world. There is need, however, of patience, and we must be sure that the emphasis is placed on the right word—German *Methodists*.

One great and pressing need of to-day is the union of German Methodism. The Wesleyans and United Brethren have already come to us. If the Evangelical Association would now unite with us, Methodism would immediately become the leading free Church of Germany, and there would be an immense saving of money and of energy.

## SCANDINAVIA

In Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, our work is steadily progressing. We have here twenty-seven thousand five hundred members and two hundred ministers. They also have contributed during the quadrennium something over \$600,000 for the work. In these countries we have had a greater influence over the State Church than even in Germany. Still our mission is

not yet accomplished, and brighter days are awaiting us in the near future.

#### FRANCE

At a reception given to the College of Cardinals on March 19, 1904, Pope Pius X took occasion to pay his respects to President Loubet, and to reprove the French government for its hostile attitude toward the Romish Church. The effect in France, however, was exactly the contrary to what was desired by the Pope. "March 21, 1905," said George Clemenceau, "will be a memorable date in the history of the French republic and of the Church of Rome." On that day began one of the greatest debates of history on one of the most far-reaching measures—the separation of Church and State. The Roman hierarchy did all in its power to prevent the catastrophe, but on July 3, 1905, the measure was voted through by a majority of 108, and became a law January 1, 1906. On May 23, 1907, we organized on Rue Calvin, Geneva, our Methodist Mission to France. Through the generosity of an honored Methodist of New York city, Mr. J. S. Huyler, we have been able to begin work at five centers—Chambery, Grenoble, Lyon, Avignon, and Marseilles. Because of my trip to Africa the beginning of this work was delayed, and because of my duties in this country during the past winter I have not been able to give to the French work that personal attention which I earnestly desired. Nevertheless, we are already meeting with great success in three of the places. At Chambery and Lyon we worship in chapels once used by the Roman Catholics. There is here also a magnificent opportunity. We need an able, consecrated man as superintendent, and a few more men like Brother Huyler who will supply us with the necessary funds, and success will be assured.

#### RUSSIA

Thank God, we are also in Russia. We entered by way of Finland and Germany, led by the providence of God. Regular services were inaugurated in Saint Petersburg November 3, 1907, with preaching in Russian, Finnish, and Swedish. In Russia there are about one hundred and fifty millions of people. Ninety millions are Russians, fifteen millions Mohammedans,



nine millions Poles, five millions Jews, three millions Finns, two millions Germans, and one million Swedes. The rest are divided among about thirty other nationalities, many of them semi-Asiatic in character. There is a profound conviction among many Europeans that the next great religious awakening on the Continent is to be in Russia, and certainly there is no Church better fitted to lead in that great work and to gather the rich harvests than the Methodist Episcopal Church. There are thousands upon thousands of people in Russia who have of recent years been reading the Word of God, and coming into possession of a personal Christian experience, who are saying to our preachers: "We believe and experience what you preach, and hence we are Methodists without knowing it." These will certainly soon come under our banner. The doors are wide open, and the call is very urgent.

We have transferred a gifted young man from the New York East Conference, the Rev. G. A. Simons, and put him in charge of all the work in Finland and Russia. He has already met with marvelous success. We must now give him the necessary appliances. With suitable headquarters at Saint Petersburg we could accomplish wonders to-day. To-morrow may be too late!

In all these Continental countries, we carry to the front the banner of total abstinence. Of course we have had to educate even our ministers up to this standard. In the face of ridicule and scorn, we have steadily pushed to the front, and the victories have been glorious.

One of the most important branches of our work is that carried on by the deaconesses. Every deaconess in Europe is a trained nurse. The mother house is at Hamburg, but now we have deaconesses' Homes also in Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark; and Italy. No words of mine can adequately express the magnificent work accomplished by our sisters.

The key to the whole situation in Europe is in our theological schools. The cry of the hour is for well-trained, consecrated men. Young men are converted, and many of them are offering themselves to the ministry, but as yet we have not the adequate schools. Splendid work has been done at Frankfurt and Upsala, and our brethren at Kristiania, Copenhagen, Helsingfors, and Rome are doing the best they can under the very re-

stricted circumstances; but these schools should be enlarged and endowed in order to meet the demands of to-day.

We urgently need training schools for Italy, France, Bulgaria, and Russia. Young men are at our doors asking to be taught, and we haven't the means. We could do wonders with a few thousand dollars.

In 1895 Bishop FitzGerald held at Berlin the first Delegated Congress representing our several European Conferences; in 1904 Bishop Vincent held the second at Zurich, and in September, 1907, I was permitted to hold the third at Copenhagen.

It is on the continent of Europe that Methodism is brought face to face with the Greek and Romish Churches. The Greek Church has become degenerate and corrupt and void of the spirit of evangelical Christianity. The study of God's Word has not only been discouraged but often forbidden. Mass is substituted for the gospel. Penance for repentance. The Virgin Mary and saints for Christ. The simple people actually believe in the saving power of the superstitious practices allowed, encouraged, and used. Religion and conduct are divorced. The conception of God is that of a tyrant whose anger must be appeased by the constant repetition of prayers and by chanting in an unknown tongue. It is pagan in all but name. As education progresses among the people, they throw away their vain superstitions, lose all faith, and abandon themselves to materialism or agnosticism.

The evils of the Greek Church are multiplied and emphasized in Romanism, but with this difference; the latter is jesuitically aggressive. It is marvelous how successful the Jesuits have been in breaking down opposition to a system by getting us to look at a person. The person may be a humble parish priest, a self-forgetting nun, a decent Bishop, or a goodish Pope. It makes no difference so long as they can influence us to believe that because certain individuals are not so bad as Romanism has been represented to be, therefore, the system has been misrepresented.

How many times I have said to myself, Lord, who is sufficient for these things! The fields are vast, the problems are many and very difficult. Methodism, however, may have a great future in Europe if we will be wise, consecrated, and courageous.



